

THEATER IN EARLY BUFFALO



A BICENTENNIAL
PUBLICATION

VOLUME XXII

by
Ardis & Kathryn Smith

ADVENTURES IN WESTERN NEW YORK HISTORY
Published by the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society

BUFFALO
HISTORY
MUSEUM



Junius Brutus Booth, Sr. and Edwin Booth, 1850

Front cover: Junius Brutus Booth as "Richelieu"

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THE THEATER IN EARLY BUFFALO

by Ardis and Kathryn Smith

The drama in Buffalo with professional players, and many of them, began in the summer of 1835. The players, frequently famed, were lured here by two new and splendid theaters which opened within a month: The Buffalo at Washington and South Division Streets, June 22; and The Eagle Street, between Main and Washington Streets, on July 21.

There were buildings used for plays before this, and occasionally a few prized performers got to the growing community on Buffalo Creek. But the young city, incorporated in 1832 with a population of about 10,000, was far behind the eastern seaboard cities where theaters had been thriving since Colonial times.

The new-born city of Buffalo had six churches, sixteen public and private schools, a library with 700 books, two banks, a newspaper, an insurance firm, several debating societies, and a Grecian-columned Courthouse erected in 1816 on the site of the present Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. An old stone jail still stood near the courthouse, a lonely survivor of the fire set by the British in the War of 1812.

Now, three years later, the newly theatrical city with approximately 16,000 residents was paving streets, planning a macadam road to Williamsville, and dreaming of the inevitable steam railway from Buffalo to the Hudson River and thus eventually to New York. Already a horse-powered railroad ran from Buffalo to Black Rock, then a separate village, and track was being laid for another to Niagara Falls. Public transportation in the city consisted of four omnibuses making hourly trips up and down Main Street. Affluent Buffalonians had their own horses and carriages.

Now a glorious time was beginning, when our town was regaled annually by as many as 60 traveling stars in a season which began in May and ended by December. Frozen lakes and canals and highways impassable to actors on horseback and actresses in stage coaches closed theaters some weeks before Christmas.

Among the eager 1835 first-nighters must have been some who remembered earlier short-lived playhouses, especially one at Main and Court Streets, also called the Buffalo. In 1826 it had offered a season of Shakespeare and other classics starring Robert Maywood, who had left London's Drury Lane stage in 1819 to begin his American career as Richard III in New York. He was a famous Philadelphia actor-manager from 1828 to 1840.

In Buffalo, Mr. Maywood's most applauded performances were his Richard III and Shylock. Other favorites were Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and one of the many versions of *Don Juan*. Following each play the company offered a short comic "after-piece," the most popular being *Tom and Jerry, or Life in London*. Tickets sold well at 25 to 75 cents, but after this single season the building was remodeled and became a school.

Some may also have remembered earlier and more primitive entertainments: wax figures of famous and infamous characters displayed in the Eagle Tavern in 1823, caravans of wild animals, some of them stuffed, or a touring English ventriloquist, the famous *Professor Charles*, in the Courthouse Sept. 12, 1820.

The new Buffalo Theater's initial offering was *The Wife*, by Irish actor-playwright James Sheridan Knowles, cousin of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. It had been a great success in London. Guest stars in the Buffalo production were Mr. and Mrs. John Greene, well-known players from Philadelphia's famed Chestnut Street Theater.

Before the play began Mrs. Greene read a rhymed opening address written by Jesse Walker, a popular young lawyer, who appeared on stage to accept a silver cup. His prize-winning paean had ten stanzas of varying length and form, beginning:

Hail to thee, City! the home of the free!
Come now the child of the Drama to greet!
Hail to thy children as well as to thee!
The child of the Drama they joyous shall meet!

and concluding:

Then Nature, with her splendid panorama
Will lend her thousand charms to greet the Drama

The Buffalo had a successful season, but its career was ended by fire — almost a chronic theatrical disaster of the period. Rebuilt later, it was used as a concert and lecture hall.

The Eagle Street fared better. It was a smash, a sockeroo, expressions unknown at the time. Grandest building of the young city and grand enough for a metropolis, its architecture was in the classic style — the interior a semi-circle with four tiers of boxes and above them a gallery.

The boxes were heavily curtained from one another — it was possible in their recesses to hold hands. Their facades were ornamented with portraits of Shakespeare, Dante, Byron, and other classic figures. The pit, down front below stage level, was for men only — the precinct of sailors, soldiers, "decayed roués and other impecunious worshipers of the dramatic art".



Eagle Street Theater, 1835.

A stunning innovation was gas light, the city's first. The gas house was next door to the theater, and the program listing included "S. B. Dean, Treasurer and Engineer of the Gas Establishment". The managers announced their aim: "to establish the drama upon a permanent and respectable footing in Buffalo; to keep a sterling stock company, competent musicians and attentive and civil officers, and procure all the talent and novelty within their power."

The Eagle Street's opening upstaged the Buffalo. It also offered a Knowles play, but this one was his greatest success, *The Hunchback*. He had played the title role in London's Covent Garden Theater in 1832 with Fanny Kemble, daughter of actor-manager Charles Kemble, as leading lady. It had taken London by storm, and within a few months was filling three New York and two Boston theaters. It was revived almost every year until 1900, and of course other actors played it in Buffalo.

The plot? Well, there is this noble and lovable cripple called Master Walter, an elderly counsellor to the supposed orphan, Julia. He does not tell her that he is her father, lest his deformity distress her. She is courted by an impostor who calls himself the Earl of Rochdale, but the last act reveals that Master Walter is not only Julia's father but the real Earl. She returns to her first suitor and true love, and everyone is happy except the bogus Earl.

Playing Julia was the first Eagle Street guest star, Mrs. McClure of Philadelphia's Arch Street Theater. Many well-known actors of the period used only their sur-names prefixed by Mr., Mrs. or Miss. No Ms. then.

The happy ending did not end the show. Intermission was followed by a second orchestral overture, a song by a company member and Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. The fashionable occupants of the boxes, best of which cost \$100 to \$150 for the season, went home or adjourned to the theater's bar after Kate was tamed, disdaining the "after-piece".

Now Buffalo became an important stop on the theatrical road map. Junius Brutus Booth came galloping over the mud-churned highway, his saddle bags stuffed with costumes and swords, also whiskey and rum, to regale your Western New York ancestors through many sold-out evenings with Shakespeare.

A tremendous actor, idol of the nation, he sometimes fell down drunk in an early scene; but when doused by buckets of water he invariably rose and rocked the house as Lear, Macbeth, a Henry or a Richard. Drunk or sober, his skill at fencing was such that actors playing Laertes in *Hamlet* or Richmond in *Richard III* were often obliged literally to fight for their lives in the stage duels.

Junius Brutus Booth was followed by his greater son Edwin, whose art and fine character shone brightly into the 1890s, dimmed only briefly by his mad younger brother's assassination of President Lincoln. In his early teens Edwin had memorized his father's roles by listening in the wings while supposedly studying his school books. He accompanied his father on many tours, with instructions from his mother to work hard on the lessons he was missing and try to keep his father sober.

Since the late 18th century almost every ship from England had brought actors — the Kembles, Edmund Kean, George Frederick Cooke, James Abthorpe Cooper, James William Wallack and others. The elder Booth was among the first of these to settle in America. With receipts from a benefit performance he bought the Maryland farm where his children were born. Three chose the theater: Edwin, named for Edwin Forrest, one of the first native American stars; the talented but erratic John Wilkes; and Junius Brutus, Jr., who with his wife Agnes had a mildly successful career. Buffalo saw them all.

In the time of the Booths and for decades later, New York represented a comparatively brief engagement to famed stars. Their far greater and more rewarding audience was in the country at large. Edwin Booth, struggling to build his ideal theater in New York, would fling himself into the coast-to-coast hinterland and return with a half-million dollar stake. Edwin Forrest, thundering prototype of the old school of acting, was touring too, and at times their paths crossed. Forrest drew the older generation, Booth was the idol of the young.

ST. JAMES HALL!
FAREWELL TOUR OF AMERICA

ANNA BISHOP

THE WORLD RENOWNED CANTATRICE.
Who, after her appearance in Buffalo, has made the concert of the entire fall, up to date.

TWO GRAND CONCERTS!

ONLY,
ON FRIDAY & SATURDAY EVENINGS,
NOVEMBER 8 & 9, 1861

GRAND MATINEE

ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT 2 O'CLOCK.

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME AT EACH CONCERT.

MAD. ANNA BISHOP

WILL BE ASSISTED BY

MR. A. SEDGWICK!

From London and New York, and

MASTER CHAS. SEDGWICK,

(the wonderful Juvenile Performer in the English Cavalcade).

PROGRAMME:

PART I.

1.—INTRODUCTION.—Favours.
2.—ON THE 8th OF JUNE 1861.
3.—FESTIVAL.—English Village Song.
4.—BALLAD.—On the same subject as the last.
5.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.
6.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.
7.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.
8.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.
9.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.
10.—NEW SONG.—The Star of America.

INTERMISSION. **TEN MINUTES.**

NEW EAGLE ST. THEATRE

LEES & WALKER. Manager. GEORGE STEEL. Stage Manager.



Entrance to the Dress Circle & Parquet, Cor. of Main & Eagle sts.
To the Family Circle & 3d tier, Cor. Washington & Eagle st.

MRS. WARNER

In an effort to make her own, MRS. WARNER, in the great historical play of Henry, model

HENRY VIII.

Her Manager will produce, for the first time in the city, a new and entirely new

GERMANIST ENTHUSIASM!

It is the greatest of all the new offerings, the largest and best.

Crowded from Pit to Dome!

On Wednesday Evening, Oct. 13th, 1882,

HENRY VIII.

1861 playbill from St. James Hall

1852 playbill from Eagle Street Theater

In scores of cities and towns theaters were ready with scenery, technicians and stock companies to support the visiting idols, some of whose performances resembled cued monologues. For the big speeches such as Hamlet's "To be or not to be", Marc Antony's "I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him", or Macbeth's "Is this a dagger that I see before me?" they often came to the footlights and faced the audience. The playgoers loved it.

As Buffalo grew and transportation improved, the Eagle Street Theater prospered. Its stock company was well rehearsed and ready for the touring stars. The *Commercial Advertiser* published a typical fan letter:

"It speaks well for the management, and for Buffalo, that the present company at our theater are men and women of estimable moral worth, as well as talented actors and actresses. With regard to the selection of plays this season, they have been made with distinct reference to propriety, elegance, amusement and above all, moral instruction."

An editorial urged readers to attend a benefit for a popular member of the stock troupe: ". . . a gentleman and an actor of sterling merit, and none more deserving of a full house".

The benefit, a part of the stock system for many years, was a real necessity. Salaries of good actors averaged about \$25 a week, and beginners worked for as little as \$5. During every engagement each

member of the cast and stage crew, the visiting star, and sometimes the playwright got the entire proceeds of a single performance.

New plays were rare. Shakespeare was supreme, but a star's repertory also included such popular characters as Claude Melnotte or Pauline in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*, and the wily French Cardinal in his *Richelieu*; Sir Edmund Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, a melodrama by George Colman, Jr.; Meg Merrilies or Bertram in a dramatization of Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*; and the title role or hero of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, by Augustin Scribe. In an average season at least three or four touring luminaries gave Buffalo their interpretations of such favorites.

Adrienne was an actress who loved a nobleman of high army rank, believing him to be a young lieutenant. On her deathbed she learned that her beloved was a Grand Marshal of France and that he loved her truly. Tears flowed all over Europe and America for 60 years. In *The Lady of Lyons* Claude loses his beloved Pauline when he confesses to unethical conduct. He redeems himself by a glorious career in Napoleon's army, and returns just in time to save Pauline from marrying a rich man to rescue her father from ruin. His final poetic speech always drew cheers and happy tears:

Ah, the same love that tempts us into sin,
If it be true love, works out its redemption;
And he who seeks repentance for the past
Should woo the angel Virtue in the future.

Bulwer-Lytton's most durable play was *Richelieu*, first performed in London in 1839 with William Macready as the political prelate, King Louis XIII's Henry Kissinger. Macready brought the play to America in 1843, and Edwin Forrest played it in the same year, touching off a long rivalry between admirers of the two actors which led eventually to the notorious Astor Place riot of 1849 in New York. The dispute this time was over competing interpretations of *MacBeth*, and it ended with 22 dead and 36 injured.

Macready brought his repertory of Shakespeare and Bulwer-Lytton to Buffalo's Eagle Street five years before the tragic New York evening sent him back to England. The *Commercial Advertiser* reported on June 25, 1844:

. . . Macready's conception of Hamlet certainly differs materially from all the great tragedians of the day, and yet it is *strictly correct*. All the faculties, powers and energies of his soul seem to be concentrated and wholly dedicated to one great and all-absorbing purpose —
REVENGE!



Macready in the role of William Tell



Edwin Forrest at age 21

So perfectly natural was the character portrayed that it might be said THERE APPEARED TO BE NO ACTING, all was REAL! Many of his impulses were so terrifically startling as to shake the nerves of the boldest spectators. He was well sustained throughout, and the play went off with credit to the establishment.

The most popular non-Bardian villain for decades was Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, by Philip Massinger (1583-1640). The play was based on a British political scandal of 1620 when Sir Giles Mompesson, an extortionist and monopolist, was stripped of his knighthood and banished. Ladies sometimes fainted when Sir Giles died on stage or, in some versions, went mad and was carried off to Bedlam, the notorious London asylum.

Junius Brutus Booth the elder made his last appearance in the Eagle Street Theater in October, 1848, four years before his death. A reviewer reported: "Mr. Booth, the great tragedian, appeared last evening as Bertram, and never, to our mind, played more effectively. . . . In his particular line he has no rival. . . . Tonight Mr. Booth will personate Sir Giles Overreach, and a rich intellectual feast is anticipated." The writer obviously had no doubt that his readers were familiar with both characters and needed no further details.

By 1850 Buffalo's population was about 30,000 and growing fast. The stock company flourished and the touring stars kept coming, among them Charlotte Cushman, first great native American actress. She was famous



Joseph Jefferson



J. Jefferson as "Rip Van Winkle"

as Meg Merrilies in *Guy Mannering* but also played Romeo and Hamlet, with her sister Susan as Juliet and Ophelia. Edwin Forrest came, and Charles Kean with his co-starring wife Ellen Tree; Edward L. Davenport, who had begun his career in minor parts with Junius Brutus Booth; James H. Hackett, America's favorite Falstaff; and young Joseph Jefferson, later a nation-wide sensation as Rip van Winkle.

On May 10, 1852, The *Buffalo Courier's* daily column of short paragraphs headed LOCAL NEWS began with this item: "The Theater will of course be crowded tonight to witness the performance of the Countess of Landsfeld, whose name is familiar to people of two hemispheres."

The Countess was indeed well known, especially by her stage name of Lola Montez, as the epitome of sinful glamor. Born in Ireland and christened Marie Dolores Eliza Gilbert, married briefly to a British Army officer stationed in India, she had later toured Europe as a self-made actress and Spanish dancer. Her dancing was sometimes applauded, sometimes hissed. Critics said she could not keep time to the music.

But she had beauty, wit and a flair for politics. She frequented novelist George Sand's celebrated Paris salon, and her loves included great men of the time, notably Franz Liszt and Alexander Dumas père. Most famous was King Ludwig I of Bavaria, a poet, gifted city planner and enthusiastic patron of the arts. He valued her advice, made her a Countess and built a beautiful palace for her.



Reprint from "The Uncrowned Queen"

The Countess of Landsfeld (Lola Montez) in a painting from King Ludwig's collection.

The revolution of 1848 forced King Ludwig's abdication and Lola Montez was banished from Bavaria. She toured England, Australia, and the United States with a repertory including Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, *Lola Montez in Bavaria*, a play written for her by an obscure playwright called C.P.T. Ware, and the musical extravaganza booked for Buffalo, *Festival in Seville*.

Next morning the *Courier's* Local News column had a headline in large type—BURNING OF THE EAGLE ST. THEATER — and a longer story:

At almost a quarter past one this morning, a fire broke out in the Eagle Street Theater, and in an hour afterwards nothing was left standing except the walls.

The fire was discovered in the Scene Room, on the Main St. side, and is supposed to have been the work of an incendiary, no fire or lights having been used there during the day or evening. . . . The loss is heavy to all concerned, as there is no insurance on the building or contents. . . .

Lola Montez, who played last evening, took her wardrobe home, and lost nothing. We understand that she was not pleased with her reception, and after the performance demanded her money and refus-

ed to play tonight. The fire of course settles that. She and her entire troupe were on the walk near the Theater during the fire. . . . The night was clear and moderately warm, just right for the firemen, who worked with unusual spirit.

The column continued with a number of brief news items, such as announcement of a City Council meeting and the capture of "a fine specimen of beaver" in Black Rock harbor. The longest and most interesting paragraph reported: "The longest train of passenger cars ever run on the Buffalo and Rochester road came in a 5 o'clock Sunday afternoon. It consisted of 36 cars which were all full of passengers, mostly emigrants. The sidewalks from Main St. to the depot were lined with them for at least two hours."

Rumors that Lola Montez had started the Eagle Street fire apparently were not taken seriously, for the show was moved to the old Buffalo Theater on Washington St. for a second performance, and the *Courier* reported on May 12: "Lola Montez danced with great spirit last evening, to a better house than she had the night before, and her performances were received with applause. For the present the old Eagle Street company continues at the Buffalo Theater. . . ." The *Montez Festival in Seville* apparently had moved to another town, for the *Courier* announced: "Plays for tonight are *The Republican*, *Veteran of Moscow*, and *The Dead Shot*." Authors of this triple bill were not identified.

A completely new Eagle Street Theater at the corner of Eagle and Washington Streets was finished in time to open in September with a benefit performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* to help the management recoup its fire loss. But around the corner on Main St. on land now occupied by the Main-Seneca branch of Marine Midland Bank, a new playhouse destined to eclipse all predecessors was almost ready for an October opening. This was the Metropolitan, later re-christened Academy of Music, a name considered more genteel.

Reporters describing the new theater were overwhelmed by its spaciousness (110 by 82 feet) and "rich decor in French and Grecian style". The stage was 50 feet deep, height from parquette to dome 46 feet. "Two gorgeous six-light chandeliers and 48 French cup lights" illumined "massive carved work in white and gold, iron trellis work outlining ornamental parts of boxes and proscenium". Balcony ceilings were covered with scarlet velvet plush and boxes were trimmed with brocatelle and lace curtains. The 2500 seats were covered with costly damask.

The Metropolitan's first visiting star was Anna Cora Mowatt, actress, playwright and novelist. Her play, *Fashion, or Life in New York*, had been an international success in 1845, hailed as the first American social satire, and she had starred in the London production. But for her



Reprint from "The Lady of Fashion"

Anna Cora Mowatt as "Beatrice"

Buffalo debut she played Juliana in John Tobin's popular romance, *The Honey Moon, or How to Rule a Wife*.

First night fanfare began with an orchestral overture and introduction of the guest star and the stock company. Mrs. Mowatt read an opening address written by Anson B. Chester, local news editor of the *Buffalo Express*, who received a \$100 prize. The entire company then sang the national anthem, and after a brief intermission and another overture the play began. It was followed by a song, a balletic pas de deux, a third overture and a farce called *Poor Pillicoddy*.

Next evening Mrs. Mowatt appeared in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which was followed by a comedy, *The Stage Struck Lawyer*. Another well liked performance by the guest star was in the title role of *Ion*, an adaptation of Euripides' post-Trojan War play.

But the Eagle Street Theater was not yet ready to give up. Following the Metropolitan's opening this notice appeared in the *Courier*: "In spite of the strong attraction presented by a rival establishment, the Eagle Street Theater had a very full and fashionable house last night for the performance of *Henry VIII*. Tonight's program will include Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," its first showing here.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was a triumph for the Eagle Street. George D. Aiken's dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel had been performed for the first time on Sept. 27, in Troy, N.Y. and was on its way to a

record-breaking 100-night run in that city.

Mrs. Stowe's Tom was brave, physically powerful, on the crest of young manhood. He never said, "Yassuh, Massa". He said, "No master". He was flogged to death for obdurate, life long nay-saying. His ennobling influence focused the world's horror on slavery, and his spirit marched with the Union battalions more than a century ago.

In 1851, the editor of *National Era* had sent Mrs. Stowe a \$100 bill in payment for anything she chose to write. She wrote *Uncle Tom, or Life Among the Lowly*, published soon after in book form as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She didn't reserve dramatic rights — to her the stage was the Devil's domain. So unauthorized dramatizations sprang up around the world. Within a year Uncle Tom, Little Eva, Topsy and Eliza were filling three London and two Paris theaters. For 57 consecutive years, ten to twenty *Uncle Toms* were on continuous tour of the United States, including of course Buffalo. Mr. Aiken's version is the only one taken seriously by theater historians. He was rewarded by a gold watch and a small role in the play.

Mrs. Stowe, heavily disguised against the disgrace of play attendance, was spirited into the theater one evening by the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. This was her first stage show and probably her last. She was transfixed, exalted. She wept, and Topsy wowed her.

Near Buffalo's two theaters were Concert Hall, American Hall, and Townsend Hall, all of which housed concerts, operas, poetry readings, lectures, debates, and other assorted entertainments.

A reviewer in 1849 described a notable cultural event:

Concert Hall was well filled Saturday evening by an audience composed of many of our most cultivated citizens, to hear Mrs. F. K. Butler read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Of the hundreds present there were not probably a dozen persons who had not read the play a dozen times and who did not think themselves familiar with all its beauties. Yet none, we venture to say, left the hall without feeling that there was a world of thought and expression in Shakespeare then revealed to them for the first time. . . . At the close of some highly wrought passage, as the fair reader paused for a moment, her head superbly thrown back, with flashing eye, dilated nostril and curling lip, we could not but wish that she was treading the stage instead of sitting behind an encumbered table destructive of illusions. . . .

Mrs. Butler possesses great versatility, and in her mobility of features and expression, variety of tone and apt, easy gesture, showed that she could command the laughter of her audience as easily as its tears. The play for this evening, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, will give full play to her comic powers.



Courtesy of "The American Portrait Book"

Fanny Kemble

The writer's assumptions were no doubt correct — most members of the audience were familiar with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And they knew that Mrs. Butler was Frances Anne (Fanny) Kemble of the great English stage family.

She had toured the United States in 1832, repeating her London sensation as Juliet with her father, Charles Kemble, as Mercutio, and as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Julia in *The Hunchback*. But she did not like the stage, and had left it to become a reader in order to use her full, rich voice "without the vulgarity of acting." Her marriage to Pierce Butler, a wealthy Georgia plantation owner, had ended in divorce because she could not live with slavery.

Brief notices in mid-nineteenth century Buffalo newspapers show a variety of other attractions:

In spite of bad weather Mr. Park Benjamin was well received last evening by a fashionable audience in American Hall. . . . He will read a poem this evening before the Young Men's Association on the interesting subject of matrimony — why it is committed and why avoided.

Professor Grimes lectures and performs experiments every evening this week.

(Advertisement) IMMENSE ATTRACTION! GRAND CON-
CERT AMERICAN AHELL BY DELEBRATED COMPOSER WIL-
LIAM VINCENT WALLACE, ASSISTED BY MLLE. ROSE
JACQUES FROM IMPERIAL OPERA OF RIGA.

George Copway, celebrated Indian chief, will lecture in Concert
Hall on 'The Religious Beliefs, Poetry and Eloquence of the North
American Indians.'

William Makepeace Thackeray will give readings on Kings
George III and George IV.

Advocates of women's rights were prominent on the lecture circuit in
the 1840s, '50s and '60s, and most of them appeared in Buffalo. Lucy
Stone, founder of the league named for her, campaigned for equal suffrage
and the right of married women to keep their maiden names. Frances
Wright shocked her audiences by promoting "free love colonies." Mary
Wollstonecraft Shelley, wife of poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and author of
Frankenstein, spoke on "Vindication of the Rights of Women." Lola
Montez returned to praise historic heroines and denounce the double
standard of morals. She attacked Thackeray, accusing him of using her as
his model for Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*, and quoted Jean-Jacques
Rousseau as saying, "All great revolutions were owing to women."

But when Pauline W. Davis spoke on "Women's Rights" in Town-
send Hall on September 15, 1852, a reporter assigned to cover the event
explained that he had gone purely out of curiosity and didn't stay long.
Ignoring her lecture, he described his amazement at the speaker's
appearance. Expecting "a tall, gaunt, dried up, rough-voiced female," he
was astonished to see "a fair-haired lady in dark silk with a white vest,
French fashion, a neat cravat and handsome pin . . . her voice low, her
posture graceful — altogether a gentlewoman."

Way down upon the Swanee River,
Far, far away,
There's where my heart is turning ever,
There's where the old folks stay

Buffalo enjoyed a world premiere when E. P. Christy first sang this
ballad written especially for him by Stephen Foster in 1850. Christy was
manager and star of the Christy Minstrels, which he had organized and
presented in the Eagle Street Theater in 1842.

The classic minstrel show format is generally credited to Christy and
his company — a chorus of male singers, an "interlocutor" who joked with
two "end men," banjo and tambourine players and clog dancers — all
with exaggerated black-face make-up. The Christy Minstrels toured

America and England to uproarious applause, and when E. P. Christy retired in 1854 his Buffalo protege, George Harrington, took Christy as his stage name and continued with equal success. Within a few decades scores of minstrel troupes were crossing the country, and they remained popular until the 1920's.

How would real blacks have felt about the minstrels? Of course they never saw them in the South while slavery lasted, and after emancipation they were not allowed in all-white theaters.

But the history of the minstrel show, in Buffalo and elsewhere, is another story. So, too, is the continuing growth of theater in Buffalo and changes in show-goers' tastes.

Coming: Next Week "EAST LYNNE!"

Photo Credit, page 7:

"The American Stage" by Coad and Mims

Volume 14 in the YALE PAGEANT OF AMERICA series

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ardis Smith was a reporter for the *Chattanooga Times* while attending the University of Chattanooga. He has been a political reporter for the *Daily Oklahoman* and *Times*, state editor of the *Cleveland Press*, theater and book critic of the late *Buffalo Times* and theater critic for the *Buffalo Evening News*. During World War II he travelled to China, Burma, and India as war correspondent and documentary film writer for RKO-Pathe.

Mrs. Smith was a reporter for the *Oklahoma News* upon graduation from the University of Oklahoma. She did public relations work in New York and Cleveland and wrote a radio column for the *Buffalo Times* in the 1930's. She occasionally does free-lance writing.

POSITIVELY THE LAST NIGHT
FAREWELL CONCERT
AMERICAN HOTEL.

THIS EVENING.
Thursday, Sept. 23d.

CHRISTY'S
 Original and well known Band of
MINSTRELS

Have the honor of announcing to their friends and the citizens of Buffalo generally, that they will give **TWO ONLY** of their famous and highly popular Concerts in the city prior to their departure for New York, and, in doing so, will make a special effort to give a variety of **Entirely New Songs, Choruses, Burlesques, &c.** The Music for which they have the most Popular Operas of the day. Accompanied with the Violin, Accordion, Banjo, Triangle, Bone, Castanets and Tamborine.

PROGRAMME FOR THIS EVENING.

PAUSE OF SILENCE.

MINSTREL OVERVIEW......
 "WATER IN THE ROAD".....
 "FRONT OF ALABAMA".....
 "DUFFY".....
 "HARRY MARY".....
 "DILBERT WAT".....
 "WATER PETER".....
 "PUTT THAT KNOCKING".....

Burlesque Lecture on Phrenology
 By J. E. Jones and G. S. Casper.

PAUSE OF SILENCE.

Representing the peculiar characteristics of the Southern Plantation Regime.

"SOME MORNINGS".....
 "IT WILL NEVER DO TO GIVE IT UP SO".....
 "TOWERS' DOOR HUNT".....
 "PLANTATION JAIL".....
 "KAL ROAD OVERTAKEN".....
 "GALLET FIRE".....
 "JIM CROW POLICE".....
 "THE OLD SAWBONE".....
 "WHOP THAT BRACKING AT THE HOUSE".....
 "CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINIA".....

"HARD TIMES A COMING."
 Introducing the HOLIDAY or SUGAR CURE FESTIVAL DANCE. G. S. Casper and J. E. Jones.

TAMBORINEISMS
 By J. E. Jones and G. S. Casper.

MINSTREL LONG.....
 "FRANK POLICE".....

Admission Fifty Cents, with or without. Adjoining the Gallery with a Galleries. Seats open at 7 o'clock, will commence at 8 o'clock.

From Press of Jones, Thomas & Co. Can. 4th. 1894.

Playbill from the farewell performance of Christy's Minstrels.



Academy of Music, 1882.